

Introduction

Gottfried Finger was born in 1655 in Olmütz in Moravia (today Olomouc, Czech Republic). Very little is known about his career in Moravia, but it is quite certain that he was a viola da gamba player in the renowned ensemble of Bishop Liechtenstein-Castelcorno, since Finger's viol music displays the influence of the famous viol and violin virtuoso Heinrich Ignaz Biber, who was active at the bishop's court.¹ Around the mid 1680s, Finger went to London, where he became a member of the renowned Catholic Chapel Royal in 1687. Although King James II went into exile in 1688, Finger remained in London and began a freelance career, composing music for numerous operas, singspiele, masques, instrumental suites, songs, and choral works of which some were even published. Finger's successful time in England ended abruptly when in 1701 he came in only fourth in a competition for the best opera composers in London. He promptly departed London and lived as a composer and musician in Vienna and Berlin. In 1706 he entered the service in Breslau of Count Charles III Philip of Palatinate-Neuburg, following him shortly thereafter to Innsbruck, where he became concertmaster of the court chapel. In 1717 he went with this court to Neuburg on the Danube, then to Heidelberg, and finally in 1720 to Mannheim. There, owing to his experience in working with larger ensembles, he contributed to laying the foundation for the future "Mannheim School" under Stamitz. He died there in 1730.

Whereas many works have come down to us from Finger's time in Moravia and, above all, London, only very little music has been preserved from the following period. The quantity, not to mention the variety, of Finger's preserved compositions is nevertheless immense. They are impressively documented in Robert Rawson's work.²

Music for viola da gamba makes up a substantial portion of Finger's works. It has long been known that this music is to be found above all in English libraries. However some twenty years ago a trove in Germany, which was first described by Fred

Flassig, attracted attention:³ In Sünching Castle, located near Regensburg, an extensive manuscript with works for viola da gamba was found.⁴ It consists of two part books, bound in leather, with the inscription *VIOLA DI GAMB: i* and *ii*, respectively. The collection is anonymous, but thanks to numerous concordances, Fred Flassig and Robert Rawson were able to show that it exclusively contains works by Finger, which are indeed even autographs.⁵ On the basis of dated concordances, it can be concluded that the Sünching manuscript was written around 1670, thus before Finger's arrival in London.

In the first part, the manuscript contains nineteen sonatas, two intradas, and five suites for two viols. The second part is made up of seven suites for the rare combination of viola da gamba and barytone. Most of the sonatas have Latin titles, such as *Ariosa*, *Augustiniana*, *Grandoena*, *Suavisona*, *Furiosa*, *Curiosa*. These names are not always easy for us to interpret and lend the collection a mystical touch.⁶

In general, the works place great demands on the performers. This allows the conclusion that Gottfried Finger must have been a true virtuoso on the viol. The sonatas are made up of sections in the manner of the *stylus phantasticus*, which mostly segue from one to the next without a break. There are frequently also solo sections for both players, which almost seem like a competition. Seven of the suites are intended for instruments with scordatura tunings, and transposition plays a role in the suites with barytone – all of these being characteristics that do not make performance any easier today.

The question arises of whether the pieces of the Sünching manuscript (with the exception of the barytone suites in which the bass is integrated in the barytone part) were played with or without basso continuo. That is to say, whether a third book, which has meanwhile been lost, possibly existed. Robert Rawson has answered the question in the affirmative.⁷ As evidence, he cites the *Pastorelle* in Sünching no. 17, which is also found in Oxford,⁸ but there for three violas da gamba and bass, whereby the

¹ The biographical information largely comes from the preface of *Gottfried Finger, The Music for Solo Viol*, eds. R. Rawson and P. Wagner (London: Fretwork, 2009), FE28.

² Robert G. Rawson, *From Olomouc to London: the Early Music of Gottfried Finger (c.1655–1730)* (London: Royal Holloway, University of London, 2002), Thematic Inventory, p. 149ff.

³ Fred Flassig, *Die solistische Gambenmusik in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1998), p. 56ff.

⁴ D-SÜN Ms 12.

⁵ Rawson, *From Olomouc*, p. 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95f.

⁸ GB-Ob Mus.Sch.d.249.

bass and the third viol are almost identical throughout. There are several indications in the Sünching manuscript that a bass is missing, for example when both instruments pause at the same time. The bass is most obviously lacking in the solo sections, but there are also other passages where this is apparent. The decisive musical criterion for an appraisal of the question of a basso continuo part and its instrumentation consists of the functional harmonic implications in at least one of the preserved solo parts. The more this dimension is present, the more a chordal instrument is sufficient for the accompaniment. Otherwise, an additional viola da gamba playing along on the bass part could be appropriate.

Edition Güntersberg is issuing several works from the Sünching manuscript in practical editions. These contain a figured bass composed by Wolfgang Kostujak. In addition to the score, a separate bass part is also included. With that, the players have at their disposal all possible combinations for setting the bass part.

In the viol parts, our editions follow the original as far as possible. Slurs have been added in accordance with parallel passages. The occasional passages in soprano clef have been transposed into alto clef. The positions of changes between bass and alto clef have been shifted where this makes the musical themes easier to recognize. Corrected accidentals are given in parentheses. Bar lines, frequently missing in the manuscript, have been added without comment. Other alterations with respect to the original are listed in the Critical Report.

We would like to thank Heidi Gröger, Martin Jantzen, and Wolfgang Kostujak for extensively and impartially trying out and discussing the pieces

with us. Our unanimous opinion is that this music gains greatly with the bass line. We would also like to thank Jessica Horsley for her CD *Furiosa*, which provided the impulse for our renewed occupation with Finger,⁹ Robert Rawson and Mark Caudle for their suggestions, Anke Laser for her help with the translation of the names of the sonatas, and Franz Fackelmann for his help with the cover image. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the current owner of Sünching Castle, Johann Carl Freiherr von Hoenning-O'Caroll, for allowing us to examine the manuscript at length.

The present volume contains the *Intrada Violetta* of the Sünching manuscript, **D-SÜN Ms 12, no. 21**. This piece occupies a special place in the manuscript, since it is written for two high instruments. The designation "Violetta" is somewhat misleading, since as a rule it is used for instruments in the alto or tenor range. Both parts are however written in treble clef and are best played on a treble viol.

The *Intrada* begins with a cantabile introduction in 3/2 meter. This section leads into a Presto in 4/4 and then in 3/8 time, in which the two parts alternately ornament the same melody. This is followed by an Adagio in which initially the theme of the beginning is quoted, but that soon displays smaller note values so that the *Intrada* ends quite animatedly. The addition of a bass part suggests itself in this piece, which is very reminiscent of Corelli.

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⁹ *Furiosa* – Gottfried Finger, virtuoso music for two bass viols, Jessica Horsley and David Hatcher, Pan Classics PC 10228, 2007.